

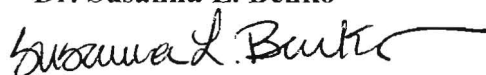
**What Are They Writing?**  
**Balancing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Social Media Writing with Traditional Academic Expectations**

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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**Thesis Advisor**  
**Dr. Susanna L. Benko**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susanna L. Benko". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

**Ball State University**  
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## Abstract

When thinking about the types of writing with which students in secondary English language arts classrooms engage, the genres that often come to mind are analyses, both literary and rhetorical, as well as research papers. With the rise of social media, students are becoming further removed from these genres of writing, engaging instead with writing that on the surface appears to be more fragmented and interactive. By thinking about the roles audience, context, and interpretation play in the composition of traditional academic writing as well as tweets on the social media platform Twitter, teachers can rephrase some of the questions about composition in a way to which 21<sup>st</sup> century students are more likely to relate. Because I presented my research at a roundtable session at the 2013 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention, I include reflections that detail how I arrived at my final idea for the presentation and that document the feedback I received from the roundtable session.

## Acknowledgements

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I would finally like to thank my friends and family for supporting and encouraging me throughout the creation of this project. Thank you to Nakkia Patrick for giving me feedback and helping me format my handout the night before the presentation and Richard Storey for consistently showing interest in my project in some of its less developed stages. To my parents Linda and Dan, even though neither English nor education are your fields of expertise, I appreciate you listening to my frustrations and giving me ideas about the direction of my project from an outside perspective. And to my brother Drew, thank you for giving me honest feedback about my ideas from the perspective of a high school senior. You are my toughest critic and I will be a more effective teacher because of your feedback.